

# The Relationship between Occupational Burnout and Personality Traits of Turkish EFL Teachers

Ihsan Unaldi<sup>1\*</sup> Mehmet Bardakci<sup>1</sup> Ferhat Dolas<sup>2</sup> Dilara Arpaci<sup>3</sup>

1. Faculty of Education, University of Gaziantep 27310 Şehitkamil / Gaziantep, TURKEY

2. Ferhat Dolas Sabahattin Zaim Social Sciences High School Şehitkamil / Gaziantep, TURKEY

3. Dilara Arpaci Faculty of Education, University of Gaziantep 27310 Şehitkamil / Gaziantep, TURKEY

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: ihsanunaldi@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study aims at determining the relationship between occupational burnout and personality traits of Turkish EFL teachers. Occupational burnout has been studied from numerous perspectives with a wide range of professions including teachers. Many parameters in the burnout process like age, poor leadership and stressful environments have been mostly agreed on. However, the related literature lacks studies concerning language teachers. Furthermore, the relationship between occupational burnout and personality traits of language teachers has also been ignored. Taking this point into account, Turkish teachers of English working in a certain district in Turkey are the focal point of the study, and 224 of them participated in it. The data was collected via two questionnaires. Occupational burnout was measured with Maslach Burnout Inventory and the personality traits of the participants were measured with the Five-factor Personality Inventory. Relevant issues were also analyzed through a qualitative approach. No dominant personality trait could be detected among the participants. The results also showed that occupational burnout exists among the participants but due to different factors than being questioned. A positive correlation between neuroticism and occupational burnout is also among the findings of the current study.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers, burnout, personality traits

## 1. Introduction

The first concern of the current study is to find out if there are some common personality traits of Turkish teachers of English (henceforth EFL teachers). The next concern relates to their occupational burnout level and factors affecting them, and the last one is the relationship between these two variables.

### 1.1 Personality

The phrase personality sounds simple and direct, but when it comes to defining it, different perceptions might arise. For example, one definition of personality refers to it as an inborn temperament and features arising in different situations and a combination of the characteristics of a person which separate him/her from other people (Phares, 1991: p. 29). Another definition might ignore this innateness and put emphasis on individual's psychological functions and social interactions;

"An individual's pattern of psychological processes arising from motives, feelings, thoughts, and other major areas of psychological function. Personality is expressed through its influences on the body, in conscious mental life, and through the individual's social behavior." (Mayer, 2005)

Deciding on general personality types has been a very active field of study because it seems that personality is related with nearly all aspects of human life. One of the most valid and reliable inventories is NEO Five-factor Inventory (henceforth FFI) (Costa and McCrae, 1985) which is used to assess neuroticism (the susceptibility to psychological distress, inability to control urges, proneness to unrealistic ideas and inability to cope with stress), extraversion (the disposition towards positive emotions, sociability and high activity), openness to experience (the proclivity towards variety, intellectual curiosity and aesthetic sensitivity), agreeableness (the inclination towards interpersonal trust and consideration of others), and conscientiousness (the tendency towards persistence, industriousness and organization) (Costa et al., 1991). The following outline of these personality types (Haslam, 2007: pp. 26-28) presents them with opposing concepts.

**Extraversion** is a term that originated in the personality theory of Carl Jung, who meant by it an orientation to the outside world rather than to private experience. Extraversion is best exemplified by traits involving sociability, in particular a preference for large groups.

**Agreeableness**, it involves cooperativeness, altruism, and a generally warm, compliant, and trusting stance towards others. Disagreeable individuals are characterized as cold, callous, selfish, calculating, hostile, and competitive in their motivations.

**Conscientiousness** generally reflects self-control, planfulness, and being organized, efficient, and deliberate in one's approach to tasks. Unconscientious people tend to be impulsive, disorganized, oriented to the present rather than the future, and careless towards their responsibilities.

**Neuroticism** has to do with people's emotional instability. Negative emotions, including anger,

sadness, shame, and embarrassment. Does not imply the presence of any mental disorder. In this expanded sense, neurotic people are more prone to experience negative emotions, to be psychologically maladjusted and vulnerable, and to have low self-esteem.

**Openness to experience** is a somewhat vague term for a factor that has proven to be controversial and difficult to name. Metaphorically, 'openness' implies a willingness to adopt novel and unconventional ways of thinking and behaving, manifest in such traits as creativity, imaginativeness, curiosity, and aesthetic appreciation. Open people are heavily invested in cultivating new experiences, and have a mild tendency to score relatively high on measures of intelligence. People who fall at the other end of this factor are conventional and narrow in their interests, and conservative and sometimes rigid in their approach to life's challenges and opportunities.

These personality traits shouldn't be considered as categories with clear boundaries. Actually, pathological cases set aside, it is not usual for an individual to score dominantly high in one category and very low in another. Therefore, FFI doesn't provide score ranges to determine the personality type, but rather a dispersion model of personality.

### *1.2 Occupational burnout*

The term of "burnout" was first introduced to literature by Freudenberger (1974) who described it as to fall, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resources. Burnout among human services workers has been examined since then, and it has been agreed upon that burnout is a negative affective response which is specific to human service personnel (Kokkinos, 2007). As a symptom, burnout is the reaction to sustained high stress which commonly results either in "withdrawing and caring less, or in working harder, often mechanically, to the point of exhaustion" (Farber, 1991). It occurs as a "progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose, and concern as a result of conditions of work" (Edelwich and Brodsky, 1980), and it results from prolonged exposure to chronic, job-related stressors as a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001; Maslach, 2003; Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000; Pines and Aronson, 1988). In the burnout process, individuals, who are highly motivated and committed, change their attitude with the loss of spirit (Pines and Aronson, 1988) with a lowered sense of accomplishment. Similarly, Maslach and Leiter (1997) defined burnout as an "erosion of engagement" which develops gradually over time, which is in line with the "spiral of loss" defined by Hobfoll and Shirom (2000).

Physical exhaustion, increased susceptibility to illness, sleep disorders, psychosomatic problems including ulcers, headaches and back pain, increased use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, and accident proneness are among the negative side effects of burnout (Edelwich and Brodsky, 1980) which result in a variety of psychological and behavioural difficulties such as decreased self-esteem, depression, feelings of helplessness, emotional exhaustion, negative self-evaluation and sometimes suicidal thoughts (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The inconsistency between personal and organizational values is one of the key risk factors for the development of occupational burnout (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). The negative effects of burnout may lead to absenteeism, decreased quality of work, increased employee turnover, low staff morale and increased stress on co-workers (Pines and Kafry, 1978). If there is a harmony in individual and organizational values, work engagement will be higher and the risk of occupational burnout will be lower (Dylag, Jaworek, Karwowski and Marek, 2013). Studies emphasize that burnout is identified with different aspects of work environment, in particular, work overload, role ambiguity or role conflict (Janssen, Schaufeli and Houkes, 1999).

Burnout generates as a three dimensional syndrome which includes the feelings of (1) emotional exhaustion (feeling of drain and tiredness), (2) depersonalization (treating clients as impersonal objects) and (3) lack of personal accomplishment –reduced personal accomplishment- (feeling of inefficiency, ineffectiveness and inadequacy) as a response to chronic stress in jobs where individuals work with people (Maslach, Jackson and Leiter, 1996). The feelings of being emotionally overwhelmed and a strong reduction of one's emotional resources are the signs of emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization refers to a negative attitude towards the people in the work environment, and reduced personal accomplishment takes place through a person's conscious judgment of the relations to his or her job performance in a negative way (Schaufeli, Maslach, and Marek, 1993). In analyzing teachers' burnout syndromes, Maslach and Jackson's model has been adopted widely because the Maslach Burnout Inventory (henceforth MBI) is consistently found to be a reliable instrument (Cephe, 2010). While Maslach (1989) categorizes burnout in three dimensions, Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) suggest four stages for burnout development: enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration and apathy, and through the stages, there is a progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose.

The development of burnout has also been related to factors in the work environment such as low pay, long hours, lack of opportunity for career advancement, inadequate training, lack of support from supervisors, bad politics on the job, work overload, a lack of employee input into decision making, insufficient time out away from clients, too many hours in direct client contact and a poor physical work environment" (Drude and Lourie,

1984; Pines and Maslach, 1978; Savicki and Cooley, 1987). The other parameters related to burnout are age, gender, self-discipline problems, emotional labour, administrative applications, job demands, job control, social environment, experience, work engagement, current occupational stressors, sense of significance, confidence, extra role time (Luk, Chan, Cheong and Ko, 2010; Cheng et al., 2012; Bayram, Aytac and Dursun, 2012; Cephe, 2010; Fernet, Guay and Senecal, 2004; Purvanova and Muros, 2010; Pines and Keinan, 2005; Dylag, Jaworek, Karwowski and Marek, 2013).

The results of a relatively recent and significant meta-analysis concerning the effects of gender over occupational burnout reveal that females are more liable to burnout while men are more liable to depersonalization (Purvanova and Muros, 2010). In a similar evaluation of demographic factors, Maslach, et al. 2001 state that among the demographic variables, age has been reported to be the one that has been most consistently related to burnout. Surprisingly, the burnout levels among younger employees appears to be higher than those over 30 or 40 years old and the burnout risk is also reported to be higher at early stages of one's career.

### *1.3 Teaching and occupational burnout*

Teaching is a profession which is very liable to occupational burnout. The high percentages of teacher burnout have long been considered a crisis in education (Farber, 1991). The frequency and intensity of teacher's feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment determines the level of burnout experienced by a teacher, and "it is not unusual for conscientious teachers to experience occasional mild to moderate feelings of burnout" (Iwanicki, 2001). The influence of burnout on the quality and stability of education is a significant fact (Farber, 2001), and it is reported that teacher burnout is the most investigated subject on needs analysis measures prepared for the identification of major teacher problems (Shaw, Bensky, and Dixon, 1981). Schaufeli (cited in Pines, 2011: p. 491) asserted that teachers are the largest homogeneous occupational group investigated in burnout research – 22% of all samples.

In most teacher burnout studies, the teacher is perceived as "a person exposed to pressures stemming from a variety of sources; and a teacher's ability to withstand the pressures explains the level of his or her burnout" (Faber, 1991, cited in Friedman and Farber, 1992). As teacher burnout is an international concern (Dworkin 1997; Maslach and Jackson 1981), a great number of studies about teacher burnout have been conducted (Blasé, Dedrick, and Strathe, 1986; Burke and Greenglass, 1989; Farber, 1984; Friedman, 1991; Gold, 1985; Jackson, Schwab, and Schuler, 1986; Schwab and Iwanicki, 1982). These studies concentrate most often on (1) demographic factors like gender, age; (2) work related factors like student violence, administrative insensitivity, overcrowded classroom, inadequate salary, school culture; (3) general societal factors, namely, the pervasiveness of alienation and narcissism, and (4) on personality factors such as obsessionalism, hardiness, locus of control (Friedman and Lotan, 1985).

Burnout can also be explained as "the result of an interaction between environmental variables and personality characteristics" (Kokkinos, 2007). It is suggested that the individual's psychological adaptation to the stressors in the work environment are influenced by certain personality characteristics like coping style, explanatory style, proactive personality, and self-efficacy (Salanova, Peiro. and Schaufeli, 2002). Therefore, in addition to job related stressors, teacher's personality traits should be incorporated into the studies on burnout (Kokkinos, 2007). Individuals react in a certain way in the view of some negative events under the influence of their own personality characteristics (Kaplan, 1996). It was found that one of the most remarkable predictors of burnout was personality characteristics when it is compared with the demographic variables (Kokkinos and Davazoglou, 2008). According to dimensions in Maslach's Burnout Inventory, it can be concluded that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are more related to environmental stressors, but personal accomplishment is mostly related to personality variables (Kokkinos, 2007). In line with this, Fontana and Abouserie (1993) claim that individual characteristics have a significant influence on developing burnout.

### *1.4 Personality and burnout*

By looking at the five factors of personality traits mentioned before, it was concluded that "emotional exhaustion was associated with conscientiousness and agreeableness; depersonalization was associated with agreeableness; and personal accomplishment with conscientiousness" (Kokkinos and Davazoglou, 2005). Mills and Huebner (1998) have also reported that neuroticism and introversion were related with the three dimensions of burnout. Similarly, studies on the relationship between personality and teacher burnout have remarked that "neuroticism was associated with (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001) and predicted burnout" (Burke and Greenglass, 1995, 1996). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), in an extensive review of more than 250 studies on burnout, reported that neuroticism is one of the strongest personality to correlate with burnout, specifically with emotional exhaustion. Likewise, Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, and Carrasco-Ortiz (2005) found that the teachers high in neuroticism and introversion were the ones with the highest burnout levels.

### *1.5 The aim and importance of the current study*

Although there are many studies investigating teacher burnout by correlating it with various parameters, there no empirical studies questioning the relationship between the burnout levels of teachers of English as a foreign

language and their personality traits. By taking into account the related literature, this study tries to focus on the following research questions:

- (1) Do Turkish EFL teachers share common personality traits?
- (2) What factors affect the occupational burnout levels of Turkish EFL teachers?
- (3) Is there a relationship between personality traits of Turkish EFL teachers and their occupational burnout levels?

### 2.1 The participants

The study was carried out in Gaziantep, one of the biggest cities in Turkey, where 869 EFL teachers work in the city center only (official figure, 2013). Out of this population, 260 teachers from nearly 70 schools were chosen randomly by using cluster sampling technique which makes random sampling more practical, especially when the target population is widely dispersed. The aim is to randomly select some larger groupings or units of the populations and then examine all the participants in those selected units (Dörnyei, 2007: p. 98). Table 1 provides relevant information as to data collection process.

**Table 1** Population, sampling and data collection

Total EFL teachers in the city centre	869
Total number of surveys handed out to the participants	260
Surveys that weren't returned	15
Surveys that were removed from the analysis process (page missing, scores are the same all through the questions etc...)	21
Total surveys involved in the analysis process	224

### 2.2 Quantitative and qualitative data collection

In the data gathering process, two scales were used. In order to determine the burnout levels of the participants, the occupational burnout inventory (MBI) which was originally developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used. Participants' personality types were measured by using the FFI, developed by Benet-Martinez and John (1998). This quantitative aspect of the study was supported via qualitative inquiry. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that it has now become obvious that there is not much point in polarization of research paradigms. Qualitative and quantitative paradigms do not have to be dichotomies, they could as well be supporters of each other and they could be used together to reinforce research findings. This point of view is also referred to as *triangulation*, which means "the generation of multiple perspectives on a phenomenon by using a variety of data sources, investigators, theories, or research methods with the purpose of corroborating an overall interpretation" (Denzin, 1978, p. 301). Since this study is mainly based on a quantitative framework, its qualitative aspect should be regarded as a part of the triangulation process. With these notions in mind, both qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis tools and techniques were used.

The scoring of the FFI personality test yields non-categorical results. That is to say, the participants are required to score 44 statements in the survey within a range of 0-5. The calculations of these scores are dispersed throughout the five categories, but there are no score ranges to use to put an individual in one of the personality categories. Therefore the participant gets scores from each category, with relatively high scores from some of them and relatively low scores from the others. When it comes to the MBI scoring, the process is much more clear-cut. Scoring and interpretation for this test are performed by taking the following table as a guide.

**Table 2.** Scoring and interpretation for MBI (adapted from Maslach et al., 1996)

Section A: Burnout	Section B: Depersonalization	Section C: Personal Achievement
17 or less: Low-level burnout	5 or less: Low-level burnout	33 or less: High-level burnout
Between 18 - 29: Moderate burnout	Between 6 - 11: Moderate burnout	Between 34 - 39: Moderate burnout
Greater than 30: High-level burnout	12 and greater: High-level burnout	Greater than 40: Low-level burnout

It is clear from Table 2 that under each burnout parameter there are score ranges and corresponding levels. For example, if the participant gets 33 from Section A, he or she could be suffering from a high level of occupational burnout.

As for the qualitative data the following guiding questions presented in Table 3 were asked to the participants during the formal interviews. For the sake of getting the most out of the interviews, they were carried out in Turkish. The utterances analyzed as examples in the coming sections were all translated into English by the researchers.

**Table 3** Guiding questions used for formal interviews

- 1) Do you think teachers of English share some common personality traits?
- 2) What common features can you mention? (if the answer to the first question is positive)
- 3) Can you talk about your work and routines at school?
- 4) Do you feel that teaching is wearing you out?

The first two questions presented in Table 3 are related with the personality traits of the participants. The last two relates to their occupational burnout levels. These questions were asked to the participants in 20-minute one-to-one sessions in teachers' rooms, college offices or meeting rooms. The responses were recorded with the permission from the participants, and then these recordings were transcribed by the research team and analyzed afterwards.

### 2.3 Piloting

The data collection tools were piloted with 50 participants before the actual study. Actually, since the data collection tools are in their original languages, English, reliability and validity might not seem to be a topic of concern. Nevertheless, in order to foresee the possible practical problems, a pilot study was carried out. As a result, it was noticed that some of the items in the FFI involved words or phrases that are difficult to make sense of. For this reason, the participants were encouraged to use dictionaries or, if possible, ask the researchers about any problems they encounter.

### 2.3 Data analysis

Quantitative data collected from the participants were transformed into SPSS 21, a statistical software package for social sciences. In addition to basic descriptive data analysis, to see if occupational burnout levels changed depending on the factors such as gender and total working years t-test and one-way ANOVA were employed. In order to determine the relationship between occupational burnout and personality, correlation was calculated. In the analysis process of the qualitative data, a deductive method was used (Patton, 2002: p. 453). That is; unlike the processes involved in the Grounded Theory (Dörnyei, 2007: p. 259), concepts or codes were derived from the theoretical framework of the study, and these codes were matched with the repeating ideas in the utterances of the participants. The process was as follows:

1. Determining the concepts or codes from the theoretical framework of the study
2. Interviewing with the participants and recording
3. Reaching the saturation phase
4. Organizing the data
5. Matching the repeating ideas with the pre-determined codes and concepts
6. Reliability check for coding with an independent researcher
7. Analyzing and reporting the results

The saturation mentioned in the third step actually refers to the completeness of all levels of codes when no new conceptual information is available to indicate new codes or the expansion of existing ones (Hutchinson, 1988). In other words, at this stage, the participants start repeating the same concepts and topics without being aware of what is being said in the other interview sessions. While checking the reliability of the coding and matching in the fifth step, an independent researcher was asked to verify and check this process.

## 3. Results and Discussions

In this section, the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses will be discussed. The research questions mentioned in the methodology section will be dealt with one by one in that order. For each research question, first of all related quantitative data will be analyzed, then related qualitative results will be discussed. Accordingly, quantitative results related with the first research question will be the starting point.

### 3.1 Results related with personality

In order to answer the question whether Turkish EFL teachers share common personality traits or not, minimum and maximum scores along with group means and standard deviation scores are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Descriptive results of the Five-factor Personality Test

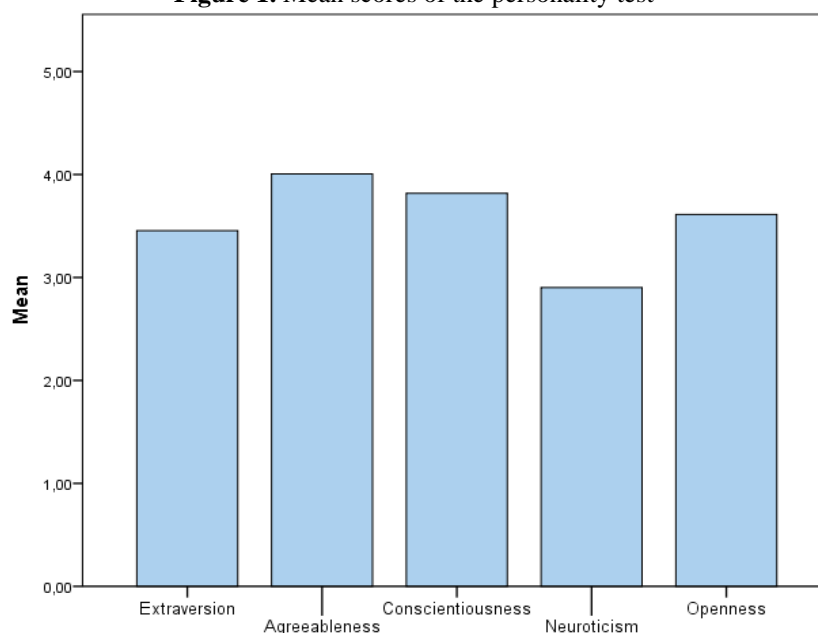
	Minimum	Maximum		sd
<b>Extraversion</b>	2,00	4,88	3,454	,580
<b>Agreeableness</b>	2,22	5,00	4,006	,558
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	1,78	5,00	3,816	,560
<b>Neuroticism</b>	1,25	9,13	2,903	,842
<b>Openness</b>	1,90	5,00	3,613	,599

In Table 4, descriptive results of the personality test are exhibited. It is clear from the table that three of the personality types, extraversion (3,45), conscientiousness (3,81) and openness (3,61), have similar scores



clustering around 3,60. Agreeableness score appears to be relevantly higher with a mean score of 4,00. On the other hand, neuroticism has the lowest mean score of 2,90 and the highest standard deviation of ,84. These scores are illustrated in Figure 1 in a bar-chart.

**Figure 1.** Mean scores of the personality test



The mean scores presented in Figure 1 clearly show that extraversion, conscientiousness and openness personality types have similar scores. Agreeableness mean score is relatively high and the neuroticism has the lowest mean score among the five personality types. These scores show that although there appears to be differences among personality type scores, these differences are not enough to reach to the conclusion that there is a dominant personality type among the participants. The same aspect of the study was also inquired through interviews with a small proportion of the participants (N=24). The participants were asked if they thought teachers of English share some common personality traits or not. Table 5 exhibits the answers given by the participants.

**Table 5.** Participants' ideas about whether the teachers of English share common personality traits

**Do you think teachers of English share some common personality traits?**

Answer	Yes	No	I have no idea
N	15	7	2

In Table 5, the answers to the question were categorized as *Yes*, *No* and *I have no idea*. In the table, it is clear that the participants predominantly support the idea that teachers of English share common personality traits (N= 15). Some of the participants do not think that such a commonality exists (N= 7). Two of the participants stated that they have no ideas about the topic. The participants who gave positive answers to the question were asked to elaborate on their ideas. Their responses were analyzed through a deductive process, and the answers were matched up with corresponding themes taken from the related literature. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Participants' responses about common personality traits and corresponding themes

**What common features can you mention?**

Repeating ideas	Corresponding theme
Not traditional Modern Follow fashion	Openness to experience
Open to new ideas Adventurous	
Not rude Polite Smiling Good communicators	Agreeableness

Repeating ideas in participants' responses and corresponding themes are exhibited in Table 6. As is clear from the table, most of the repeating ideas match up with two of the themes mentioned before: openness to experience and agreeableness. When asked to elaborate on the common personality traits of teachers of English, BU stated the following:

*BU*

*We go to seminars or official meetings where many teachers from different branches come*

*together. I enter the room, watch around for familiar faces. I tell to myself, that one, that one and that one might be a colleague. I go talk to them or ask their branches to others just to test my guesses. Believe me, most of the time I get it right.*

On the other hand, one of the participants (NK) stating that such a commonality does not exist supported this idea with the following insight.

NK

*I don't think that there is such a thing. I don't believe it. Actually, teachers of English look different from the other teachers because they are familiar with another culture. They don't have common personality traits, but they are influenced by the English and European cultures. They try to act and live like them.*

The quantitative analysis of the research question whether Turkish teachers of English share common personality traits revealed that personality traits of the subject actually tend to vary across the five personality types almost equally with relatively high score on the agreeableness and a relatively low score on the neuroticism scale. However, the predominant idea that the teachers of English actually share some common personality traits is supported through interviews with the participants. The point worth mentioning here is that agreeableness personality trait appears to be the common outstanding personality trait in both quantitative and qualitative analysis, albeit not significantly.

### 3.2 Results related with factors affecting occupational burnout

The first factor which is thought to be affecting the burnout levels of the participants is gender. The results of quantitative analysis are presented below. First of all, descriptive information concerning this point is given in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Descriptive information about participants' gender and their mean scores

Gender	f	%	(burnout)	(depersonalization)	(personal achievement)
<b>Female</b>	165	73,7	18,87	13,60	33,00
<b>Male</b>	59	26,3	16,31	12,97	31,81
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>			

Table 7 provides some basic statistics about the participants. It is obvious that the majority of the participants is female (N= 165, 73,7 %). Males, on the other hand compose nearly one-third of the population (N= 59, 26,3 %). Group means appear to be similar in all three parameters. The question to be analyzed at this point is whether being male or female affects occupational burnout levels of Turkish EFL teachers. As there are two groups in this term, after the equality of group variances were calculated and no significance was detected ( $p > ,05$ ), a *t-test* was applied and the results are given in Table 8.

**Table 8.** The effects of gender on occupational burnout parameters

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	sd	df	t	p
<b>Burnout</b>	Female	165	18,87	8,775	222	1,930	,055
	Male	59	16,31	8,677			
<b>Depersonalization</b>	Female	165	13,60	8,137	222	,522	,602
	Male	59	12,97	7,611			
<b>Personal achievement</b>	Female	165	33,00	7,580	222	,975	,331
	Male	59	31,81	9,170			

The results of the *t-test* which was computed based on gender means are provided in Table 8. The results clearly show that gender doesn't have an effect over any of the parameters related to occupational burnout (Burnout:  $p = ,055 > ,05$ ; Depersonalization:  $p = ,522 > ,05$ ; Personal achievement:  $p = ,975 > ,05$ ). The second factor which is thought to be affecting burnout levels of the participants is their total working years. Descriptive results concerning this point along with the group mean scores are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Descriptive results and group mean scores in terms of total working years

Total years	f	%	(burnout)	(depersonalization)	(personal achievement)
<b>1-5</b>	97	43,3	18,11	13,23	32,37
<b>6-10</b>	63	28,1	18,44	13,33	32,75
<b>11-15</b>	47	21,0	17,26	13,55	32,11
<b>+16</b>	17	7,6	20,29	14,65	35,88
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>			

According to the results presented in Table 9, we can see that there are five different groups in terms of total teaching years. Most of the participants appear to be working for less than five years with a percentage of 43,3. The percentage of the senior teachers are low (7,6 %) compared to the rest of the participants. The interesting point available in the table is that, although participants' burnout and depersonalization levels exhibit a small but steady increase almost in all levels, there is also an increase in the personal achievement parameter. Normally, these two group scores are expected to have negative relationship. Another interesting point that can be deduced from Table 9 is that, referring back to the burnout score interpretations mentioned before, there seems to be either a moderate or a high level of burnout in all three parameters throughout all groups, because participants' scores change between 17,26 - 20,29 for burnout; 13,23 - 14,65 for depersonalization and 32,11 - 35,88 for personal achievement (see Table 2 for details). In order to determine whether the differences in mean scores are statistically significant, after the equality of group variances were calculated and no significance was detected ( $p > ,05$ ), a one-way ANOVA was carried out and the results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10.** ANOVA results comparing participants' burnout scores with their total teaching years

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Burnout</b>	Between Groups	120,972	3	40,324		
	Within Groups	17159,774	220	77,999	,517	,671
	Total	17280,746	223			
<b>Depersonalization</b>	Between Groups	30,486	3	10,162		
	Within Groups	14206,510	220	64,575	,157	,925
	Total	14236,996	223			
<b>Personal Achievement</b>	Between Groups	199,317	3	66,439		
	Within Groups	14160,808	220	64,367	1,032	,379
	Total	14360,125	223			

In Table 10, participants' mean scores for the three burnout parameters are compared in terms of their total teaching years. It is clear from the figures that there appears to be no statistical significance among the groups in this sense (Burnout:  $p = ,671 > ,05$ ; Depersonalization:  $p = ,925 > ,05$ ; Personal achievement:  $p = ,379 > ,05$ ). Therefore, there is statistically no significant relationship between participants' total teaching years and their occupational burnout levels.

The results presented up to this point state that occupational burnout is actually present among Turkish EFL teachers, and this situation seems to be irrelevant from factors like gender or total teaching years either. This insight comes from quantitative data collected in a survey. In order to verify these outcomes through a qualitative approach, 24 of the population were asked related questions. For the sake of not directing the participants, the first question didn't involve any negative concepts and the participants were allowed to talk about any topic related to their professional lives. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Repeating ideas in the interviews and corresponding themes

<b>Can you talk about your work and routines at school?</b>	
<b>Repeating ideas</b>	<b>Corresponding theme</b>
<b>Dealing with too many young people is hard.</b>	<b>Burnout</b>
<b>Dealing with things other than my job</b>	
<i>Administrative problems</i>	
<b>Too much involvement in students' problems</b>	<b>Depersonalization</b>
<b>Caring less compared to the first years in teaching</b>	

From Table 11, the repeating ideas during the interviews and corresponding themes for these ideas are given. Although the nature of the question doesn't involve any explicit negative aspects, throughout the majority of the interviews, the participants repeatedly mentioned how hard it is to work with young people, how they are somehow forced to do things other than teaching or the problems they go through with the administrators. These



ideas seemed to be related directly with the occupational burnout. Participants also mentioned that they were too much involved in their students' problems and as a common theme, they, implicitly or explicitly, stated that they have been caring less about these problems compared to their first years in teaching. The following sample utterances will support the patterns presented in Table 11.

OK

*I sometimes feel out of energy. Because, the classrooms are so crowded, there are too many students. I sometimes feel I can't deal with all of them. It's too tiring. I can't do my job.*

AT

*The administrators' never-ending requests and meetings even on Sundays. The paperwork... I don't know what I am doing sometimes.*

MA

*The first years of my teaching were different. I used to work for my students day and night. Then it has changed. Now I just want to do my job and go home.*

Sample utterances from the participants make the points presented in Table 11 clearer. OK thinks that classrooms are too crowded, and the problems related to their students seem overwhelming. AT feels that their workload increases as a result of demands from the administration. In addition, MA compares his/her first year in teaching with today and suggests that there have been some negative changes.

After the participants were asked to talk about their work routines, and they made their points, they were asked whether they were being worn out by teaching or not; their answers are exhibited in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Participants' responses to the question whether teaching was wearing them out or not

Do you feel that teaching is wearing you out?			
Answer	Yes	Sometimes	No
N	10	9	5

By looking at the responses provided in Table 12, one could deduce that most of the participants share the idea that teaching is wearing them out because it seems that 10 of the participants are positive about it, and 9 of them state that they feel they are worn out from time to time, which is actually in line with all the results analyzed thus far. As the last thing about this issue, in order to illustrate the burnout levels of the participants as a whole, the following table can be analyzed.

**Table 13.** Descriptive statistics for occupational burnout levels of all the participants

Variable	N		sd
<b>Burnout</b>	224	18,19	8,803
<b>Depersonalization</b>	224	13,43	7,990
<b>Personal Achievement</b>	224	32,69	8,025

Means presented in Table 13 were calculated by taking all the participants as one whole group. One more time, it becomes quite clear that among Turkish EFL teachers occupational burnout is available either in moderate or high-level. The first parameter, burnout ( $\bar{X}=18,19$ ), reveals a moderate level of burnout while the second parameter, depersonalization ( $\bar{X}=13,43$ ), shows a high level of burnout. The last parameter personal achievement ( $\bar{X}=32,69$ ), also indicates a moderate level of burnout (see Table 2 for details).

### 3.3 Results related with the relationship between occupational burnout and personality

The last research question within the concerns of the current study is whether there is a relationship between personality traits of Turkish EFL teachers and their occupational burnout levels. In order to determine this point, the correlations between the two variables were calculated and the results are given in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Correlation matrix revealing the relationship between occupational burnout and personality

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>1. Burnout</b>	1							
<b>2. Depersonalization</b>	,650**	1						
<b>3. Pers. Achievement</b>	-,279**	-,376**	1					
<b>4. Extraversion</b>	-,314**	-,321**	,448**	1				
<b>5. Agreeableness</b>	-,122	-,267**	,503**	,350**	1			
<b>6. Conscientiousness</b>	-,199**	-,400**	,437**	,399**	,570**	1		
<b>7. Neuroticism</b>	,187**	,242**	-,200**	-,249**	-,310**	-,378**	1	
<b>8. Openness</b>	-,008	-,189**	,417**	,364**	,445**	,354**	-,052	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 14 presents the correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between occupational burnout and personality traits of the participants. The correlation between these two variables can be analyzed via the figures in the shaded section of the table. The significant correlations are flagged with a (\*\*) sign. As is clear from these figures, there are significant negative correlations between extraversion and conscientiousness personality traits and the two burnout parameters, burnout and depersonalization. Openness personality trait has a significant negative correlation with only the depersonalization parameter. On the other hand, four of the personal traits, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness all have positive and significant correlations with the personal achievement parameter whereas neuroticism negatively correlates with it and has positive correlations with burnout and depersonalization. Since the correlations present among personality trait items or burnout parameters are out of the scope of the current study, they will not be discussed.

### 3.4 Overview of the results

#### *(1) Do Turkish EFL teachers share common personality traits?*

The answer to the first research question inquiring whether or not Turkish EFL teachers share common personality traits is not that clear. The results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis do not seem to match in that while the quantitative analysis results show that personality traits of the participants seem to be distributed through all five categories. However, during the interviews most of the participants stated that Turkish EFL teachers share some common personality traits like openness to experience and agreeableness. Since this study is the first one to have analyzed this specific issue, no comparison with the related literature can be done at this point.

#### *(2) What factors affect the occupational burnout levels of Turkish EFL teachers?*

Gender and total working years are not among the factors affecting occupational burnout levels of Turkish EFL teachers. Female and male participants achieved similar scores in all three parameters of MBI. This outcome actually contradicts with the related literature, particularly with the meta-analysis testing the effect of gender over burnout mentioned previously (Purvanova and Muros, 2010). Interestingly, total working years of the participants appeared to be irrelevant with their burnout levels. This, again, contradicts with the related literature (Maslach et al., 2001).

The results of qualitative analyses suggest that dealing with too many students and doing things other than teaching, plus administration related problems seem to be causing occupational burnout among the participants. Participants also feel depersonalized by getting too much involved in their students' problems and consequently become less caring in time as mentioned in the related literature (Maslach, and Leiter, 1997).

#### *(3) Is there a relationship between personality traits of Turkish EFL teachers and their occupational burnout levels?*

When the relationship between personality and occupational burnout was analyzed, it was seen that extraversion and conscientiousness personality traits negatively correlate with burnout and depersonalization. Openness negatively correlates with only the depersonalization parameter. On the other hand, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness appear to have positive and significant correlations with the personal achievement parameter. Neuroticism negatively correlates with personal achievement and has positive correlations with burnout and depersonalization. These results appear to be in line with the related literature (Kokkinos and Davazoglou, 2005; Mills and Huebner, 1998; Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Burke and Greenglass, 1995, 1996; Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998; Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, and Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).

All the analyses carried out in the current study to reveal the common personality traits of Turkish EFL teachers and its relation to occupational burnout have made some points clear. First of all, the participants share the idea that such a commonality exists among EFL teachers; the common insight is that EFL teachers are somewhat more agreeable and open to new experience. However, the results of quantitative analyses contradict with this insight; the results reveal that no personality trait is statistically dominant although agreeableness scores are relevantly higher when compared to the other personality types. When it comes to occupational burnout, it is quite clear that the participants suffer from burnout either at moderate or high levels, but it isn't affected by factors like gender or total years in teaching. In this sense, the participants are commonly affected from dealing with crowded classes, things other than teaching, and administrative issues. Furthermore, they feel overwhelmed with their students' problems and seem to be caring less day by day. The relationship between personality traits and occupational burnout once again revealed a positive correlation between neuroticism and occupational burnout.

## 4. Conclusion

One of the insights that could be deduced from the results of the current study is that neuroticism seems to be having negative effects on language teaching profession by leading to occupational burnout. On the other hand, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience significantly correlate with the personal achievement parameter of the burnout scale. These outcomes could be useful in pre-service teacher

education. Training pre-service teachers about topics such as personality traits and occupational burnout will be an important asset for teacher candidates in terms of professional development as such training will provide teacher candidates much more flexibility in understanding their students and more importantly understanding themselves better.

These results could also be beneficial if issues related with foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey are to be solved before long. Technology-oriented language pedagogy has been stealing the role of language teachers for some time now. When this project was first discussed with colleagues, eyes were rolled, arms were crossed and “Burnout. Not again!” was choired altogether. However, a problem that has been studied over and over again shouldn’t mean that the problem has been resolved. Spending immense amounts of money on technology to teach English will make little sense if the teachers who will use this technology are ignored.

### Acknowledgement

This study was carried out with official permission and support from the Provincial Directorate of National Education (Gaziantep/Turkey). Without their support, this study could have never been completed. In addition, all the research team members, who all worked extra hard, deserve appreciation.

### References

- Bayram N., Aytaç, S., & Dursun, S. (2012), “Emotional labour and burnout at work: a study from Turkey”, *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 65, 300-305.
- Benet-Martinez, V., & John, O. P. (1998), “Los Cinco Grandes across cultures and ethnic groups: multitrait-multimethod analyses of the Big Five in Spanish and English”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 729–750.
- Blasé, J.J., Dedrick, C., & Strathe, M. (1986), “Leadership behaviour of school principals in relation to teacher stress, satisfaction, and performance”, *Journal of Humanistic Education and Development*, 24(4), 159-169.
- Burke, R. J., & Greenglass, E. R. (1989), “It may be lonely at the top, but it’s less stressful: Psychological burnout in public schools”, *Psychological Reports*, 64, 615-623.
- Burke, R. J., & Greenglass, E. (1995), “A longitudinal study of psychological burnout in teachers”, *Human Relations*, 48(2), 187–202.
- Cano-Garcia, F. J., Padilla-Munoz, E. M., & Carrasco-Ortiz, M. A. (2005), “Personality and contextual variables in teacher burnout”, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38, 929–940.
- Cephe, P.T. (2010), “A study of the factors leading english teachers to burnout”, *H.U. Journal of Education*, 38, 25-34.
- Cheng Y, Chen I.S., Chen C. J., Burr H, & Hasselhorn, H. M. (2013), “The influence of age on the distribution of self-rated health, burnout and their associations with psychosocial work conditions”, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 74, 213-220.
- Costa, P.T., & McCrae, R.R. (1985), “The NEO Personality Inventory manual”, Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Costa, P. T., McCrae, R. R., & Dye, D. A. (1991), “Facet scales for agreeableness and conscientiousness: A revision of the NEO Personality Inventory”, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 12, 887–890.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978), “The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods”, Englewood Cliffs, N. J. :Prentice Hall.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007), “Research methods in applied linguistics”, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Drude, K.P., & Lourie, I. (1984), “Staff perceptions of work environment in a state psychiatric hospital”, *Psychological Reports*, 54, 263-268.
- Dworkin, A.G. (1997), “Coping with reform, The intermix of teacher morale, teacher burnout, and teacher accountability”, In Biddle, B.J., T.L. Good, and I.F. Goodson (Eds.), *International Handbook of Teachers and Teaching*, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 459-498.
- Dylag, A., Jaworek, M., Karwowski, W., Kożusznik, M., & Marek, T., (2013), “Discrepancy between individual and organizational values: Occupational burnout and work engagement among white-collar workers”, *International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics*, 43 (3), 225-231.
- Edelwich, J., & Brodsky, A. (1980), “Burnout: Stages of disillusionment in the helping professions”, New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Farber, B. A. (1984), Stress and burnout in suburban teachers. *Journal of Educational Research*, 77 (6), 325-332.
- Farber, B. A. (1984), “Teacher burnout: Assumptions, myths, and issues”, *Teachers College Record*, 86, 321-338.
- Farber, B. A. (1991), “Crisis in education: Stress and burnout in the American teacher”, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Farber, B. A. (2001), “Subtypes of burnout: Theory, research and practice”, *Paper presented at the annual*

- conference, San Francisco: American Psychological Association.
- Fernet, C., Guay, F., & Senecal, C. (2004), "Adjusting to job demands: The role of work self-determination and job control in predicting burnout", *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 65, 39-56.
- Fontana, D., & Abouserie, R. (1993), "Stress levels, gender and personality factors in teachers", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 63, 261-270.
- Freudenberger, N. J. (1974), "Staff burnout", *Journal of Social Issues*, 30, 159-165.
- Friedman, I. (1991), "High- and Low- Burnout Schools: School culture aspects of teacher burnout", *The Journal of Educational Research*, 84(6), 325-333.
- Friedman, I., & Lotan, I. (1985), "Teacher burnout", Jerusalem: The Henrietta Szold Institute.
- Friedman, I.A., & Farber, B.A. (1992), "Professional self-concept as a predictor of teacher burnout", *Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 28-35.
- Gold, Y. (1985), "Does teacher burnout begin with student teaching?", *Education*, 105, 254-257.
- Haslam, N. (2007), "Introduction to Personality and Intelligence", London: Sage.
- Hobfoll, S. E., & Shirom, A. (2000), "Conservation of resources theory: Applications to stress and management in the workplace", In R. T. Golembiewski (Ed.), *Handbook of organization behavior* (2nd ed.), pp. 57-81, New York: Dekker.
- Hutchinson, S. A. (1988), "Education and grounded theory", In R. R. Sherman and R. Webb(Eds.), *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods* (pp. 123-140), Philadelphia, PA: Falmer.
- Iwanicki, E. (2001), "Understanding and alleviating teacher burnout", *Theory Into Practice*, 22, 27-32.
- Jackson, S.E., Schwab, R.L., & Schuler, R.S. (1986), "Towards an understanding of the burnout phenomenon", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(4), 630-640.
- Janssen, P.M., Schaufeli, W.B., & Houkes, I. (1999), "Work related and individual determinants of the three burnout dimensions", *Work and Stress*, 13, 74-86.
- Kaplan, H. B. (1996), "Psychosocial stress from the perspective of self-theory", *Psychosocial stress: Perspective on structure, theory, life-course, and methods* (pp.175-244), San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Kokkinos, C. M., & Davazoglou, A. (2008), "Burnout in special education teachers: The role of personality and work – related stressors", Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, 22 – 29/3.
- Kokkinos, C.M. (2007), "Job stressors, personality and burnout in primary school teachers", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77 , 229-243.
- Luk, A., Chan, B., Cheong, S., & Ko, S. (2010), "An exploration of the burnout situation on teachers in two schools in Macau", *Social Indicators Research*, 95(3), 489-502.
- Maslach, C. (1989), "Stress, Burnout and Workaholism" In R. Kilburg (Ed.), *Professionals in Distress*, Washington, American Psychological Association, pp. 53-75.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1997), "The truth about burnout", San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Maslach, C. (2003), "Job burnout: New directions in research and intervention", *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 189-192.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S.E. (1981), "The measurement of experienced burnout", *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 2, 99-113.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1996), "Maslach burnout inventory manual (3rd ed.)", Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001), "Job burnout", *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397-422.
- Mayer, J. D. (2005), "A classification of DSM-IV-TR mental disorders according to their relation to the personality system", In J. C. Thomas and D. L. Segal (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of personality and psychopathology (CHOPP) Vol. 1: Personality and everyday functioning*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Miles, M. B., & A. M. Huberman. (1994), "Qualitative data analysis" Thousand Oaks, California : Sage.
- Mills, L.B., & Huebner, E.S. (1998), "A prospective study of personality characteristics, occupational stressors, and burnout among school psychology practitioners", *Journal of School Psychology*, 36(1), 103-120.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002), "Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)", Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Phares, E. J. (1991), "Introduction to psychology", (3rd. ed.) New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Pines, A.M., & Aronson, E. (1988), "Career burnout: causes and cures", New York: Free Press.
- Pines, A., & Kafry, D. (1978), "Occupational tedium in the social services", *Social work*, 23, 499-507.
- Pines, A. M., & Keinan, G. (2005), "Stress and burnout: The significant difference", *Personality and individual differences*, 39, 625-635.
- Pines, A., & Maslach, C. (1978), "Characteristics of Staff Burnout in Mental Health Settings", *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 29, 233-237.
- Pines, A. M. (2011), "Burnout in Teaching and Learning", In Norbert Seel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of*

*Learning*, Ch. 458. Springer Science + Business Media.

Purvanova, R. & Muros, J. (2010), "Gender differences in burnout: a meta-analysis" *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 6, 279–288.

Salanova, M., Peiro, J. M., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2002), "Self-efficacy specificity and burnout among information technology workers: An extension of the job demand control model", *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 11(1), 1-25.

Savicki, V., & Cooley, E. J. (1987), "The relationship of work environment and client contact to burnout in mental health professionals", *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 1, 249-252.

Schaufeli, W. B., Maslach, C., & Marek, T. (1993), "Professional burnout: Recent developments in theory and research", Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Enzmann, D. (1998), "The burnout companion to study and practice: A critical analysis", London: Taylor and Francis.

Schwab, R. L., & Iwanichi, E. F. (1982), "Who are burnout teacher", *Educational Research Quarterly*, 77 (2), 5-17.

Shaw, S.F., Bensky, J.M. & Dixon, B. (1981), "Stress and Burnout, A Primer for Special Education and Special Education Services Personnel", Reston, VA, Council for Exceptional Children.



This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

